

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Green

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Green, Robert Lee
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green,
Dates:	July 14, 2004, October 1, 2004 and September 30, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	17 Betacame SP videocassettes (8:05:33).
Abstract:	Academic administrator Robert Green (1933 -) served as the director of the Center for Urban Affairs at Michigan State University, and later became the dean of the College of Urban Development. Green is also the former president of the University of the District of Columbia. Green was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 14, 2004, October 1, 2004 and September 30, 2004, in Las Vegas, Nevada and Summerlin, Nevada. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_095
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Renowned educator and author Robert Green was born on November 23, 1933 in Detroit, Michigan. He attended Detroit public schools, and while at student at Sherrard Intermediate School, he was a member of the band and earned extra money by delivering telegraphs. He earned his high school diploma from Northern High School in 1952, where he was a member of the football and track teams. In 1954, Green was drafted in the army and stationed at Letterman Army Hospital in San Francisco. While working at the hospital at night he attended San Francisco State College and earned his bachelor's of arts degree in general psychology in 1958. He went on to earn his master's in educational psychology from San Francisco in 1960. While working on his Ph.D. at Michigan State University, he was a researcher on a project examining desegregation in Prince Edward county Virginia, a school district that closed its public schools when ordered to desegregate. Green earned his Ph.D. in 1963.

Green joined the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) as its National Education Director in 1965. In this position he worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King until he left the organization in 1967. From 1968 through 1973, Green was the Director of the Center for Urban Affairs at Michigan State University. In 1973, he was named the Dean of the College of Urban Development, a position he held until 1982. From 1983 until 1985, Green was the President of the University of the District of Columbia. He would eventually return to MSU, where he currently works as an administrator and professor.

Green is the author of several books that focus primarily on the impact that poverty and racial discrimination has on American's urban populations. His writings include *The Urban Challenge*, *Poverty and Race* and *Metropolitan Desegregation* and *Expectations: How Teacher Expectations Can Increase Student Achievement*. Green has served as an expert witness in more than twenty school desegregation cases. He and wife Lettie have been married for nearly fifty years and have three grown sons.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Robert Green was conducted by Larry Crowe and Racine Tucker Hamilton on July 14, 2004, October 1, 2004 and September 30, 2004, in Las Vegas, Nevada and Summerlin, Nevada, and was recorded on 17 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator Robert Green (1933 -) served as the director of the Center for Urban Affairs at Michigan State University, and later became the dean of the College of Urban Development. Green is also the former president of the University of the District of Columbia.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Green, Robert Lee

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Green, Robert Lee--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Michigan State University

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, July 14, 2004, October 1, 2004 and September 30, 2004. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section A2004_095_002_001, TRT: 0:30:58 ?

Robert Green was born on November 23, 1933 in Detroit, Michigan. His father, Thomas J. Green, was born in 1895 in Jones County, Georgia to a family of sharecroppers. The Green name comes from the Greenberg plantation where his family had been enslaved. Green's paternal grandfather had two families, which Green's father supported until he moved to Detroit, Michigan to work for the Ford Motor Company. He was motivated to move North by the lynching of childhood friend; and narrowly avoided being lynched himself on a return visit to Georgia. He also served in France during World War I. Green's mother, Alberta Batrice Vinson Green, was born in 1900 in Jones County and attended an all-black girl's boarding school. At the age of sixteen, she married Green's father. Although she was primarily a homemaker, she also ran a laundry service that employed African American women and coordinated a clothing drive for people in Haiti through the Church of God in Christ. Her maternal grandmother was Cherokee Native American.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section A2004_095_002_002, TRT: 0:30:18 ?

Robert Green's family moved from Jones County, Georgia to North End in Detroit, Michigan, where he was born. When he was three years old, Green had his tonsils removed and when he was six or seven years old, his family moved to a white ethnic neighborhood where their home was stoned by a white mob. As a child, Green loved to read and heard Langston Hughes speak at a local library; he also had a lot of anger, which he attributes to his strict upbringing by his father, a Pentecostal minister. Green excelled academically at Detroit's Dwyer Elementary School, but spent a year at Moore School for Boys after throwing a book at a teacher. He recalls his father's stories about the threats black soldiers faced returning from World War I and learned about southern racism traveling to Memphis, Tennessee with his father. Green's exposure to discrimination in the North and South impacted his later work with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Five of Green's siblings died as infants, likely due to Detroit's cold winters.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section A2004_095_002_003, TRT: 0:31:13 ?

Robert Green became disillusioned with religion and was stopped attending his father's church as a teenager, once he started working. Green attended Sherrard Intermediate School and Northern High School in Detroit, Michigan. In high school, he played football and, inspired by his older siblings' post-secondary and medical studies, did well academically his last two years. After graduating in 1952, Green attended Wayne-State University in Detroit, until he was drafted in 1954 and sent to work in a military psychiatric facility in San Francisco, California, where he attended San Francisco State University. There, he studied psychology, wrestled, met his wife and was mentored by Dr. Jules Grossman and Dr. Henry Clay Lindgren. Green earned his bachelor's degree in 1958 and master's degree in 1960. He could not find a job as a school psychologist due to racial discrimination, so he entered the educational psychology doctoral program at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan and graduated in 1963.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section A2004_095_002_004, TRT: 0:30:35 ?

Robert Green's wife helped San Francisco, California police find a stolen baby in 1955. When he was a student at San Francisco State College, Green was encouraged by African American activist and psychologist Carlton Goodlett to pursue his Ph.D.; and participated in an 1956 NAACP boycott of Yellow Cab, then became the first black Yellow Cab driver in San Francisco. In 1963, Green earned his Ph.D. degree in educational psychology from Michigan State University in East Lansing. He became a professor at the university, was a plaintiff in a successful housing discrimination case in East Lansing and

successfully pressured the Big Ten Athletic Conference to integrate its officials. Green met the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1955 in San Francisco and later brought him to speak at Michigan State. In 1965, he left his professorship to work for King and the SCLC where he helped organize the 1966 James Meredith March Against Fear. Green also advised the Chicago Public School district on desegregation.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section A2004_095_002_005, TRT: 0:31:05 ?

Robert Green was with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Mississippi in the fall of 1966 when a man at a gas station threatened to assassinate King. Green describes how King accepted the possibility of assassination and King's constant harassment by the FBI. Green recalls Dorothy Cotton's reaction to the beating of Annell Ponder; and, that civil rights leaders, like King and HistoryMakers The Honorable Andrew Jackson Young and Reverend Dr. C.T. Vivian, drew energy from confronting discrimination and violence, but were also psychologically scarred by it. At the Meredith March Against Fear in 1966, Green saw a girl's forehead split open by slingshot and responded by moving the protest line in front of a white-owned store. A 1967 newspaper photo of Green in which he appeared to be fighting a trooper in Atlanta elicited a call from King to ensure Green's commitment to nonviolence. On the night King was killed in 1968, Green hosted a hundred Michigan State University students in his home in East Lansing.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section A2004_095_002_006, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Robert Green became director of the Center for Urban Affairs at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan in 1972. He led the center's efforts to collect data on discrimination and was an expert witness in many of the NAACP's school desegregation cases. From 1983 to 1985, he served as president of University of the District of Columbia. He later was an administrator at Cleveland State University, Case Western Reserve University and Cuyahoga Community College. Green returned to Michigan State in 1996, has conducted studies in Detroit and Dallas on the impact of school reform and wrote a book about the impact of teacher expectations on student achievement. He reflects upon the psychological protection afforded some civil rights activists by religion and a strong sense of self; what has been forgotten about the Civil Rights Movement; militancy and America's culture of violence; how Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death affected his legacy; and his concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section A2004_095_002_007, TRT: 0:30:48 ?

Robert Green's mother was impressed by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons when she visited Green in Atlanta, Georgia. Although his parents did not live to see him become dean of Michigan State University, College of Urban Development, they were alive to see him earn his Ph.D. degree and publish his book 'The Urban Challenge: Poverty and Race.' Green founded the Association of Black Psychologists in 1968 alongside Robert Williams and Charles Thomas. Green explains the purpose of black professional organizations and Coretta Scott King's role in preserving the strength of the King family in the wake of multiple deaths. At the time of the interview, Green had begun his term as chairman of the board of Piney Woods School in Piney Woods, Mississippi. Green reflects upon his life and his legacy, and talks about the accomplishments of his three sons.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section A2004_095_002_008, TRT: 0:02:28 ?

Robert Green describes how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section A2004_095_003_009, TRT: 0:23:05 ?

Robert Green narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section B2004_095_001_001, TRT: 0:30:54 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section B2004_095_001_001E, TRT: 0:30:54 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section B2004_095_001_002, TRT: 0:29:09 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section B2004_095_001_002E, TRT: 0:29:09 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section B2004_095_001_003, TRT: 0:30:40 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section B2004_095_001_003E, TRT: 0:30:40 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section B2004_095_001_004, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Green, Section B2004_095_001_004E, TRT: 0:31:11 ?